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Opening remarks
Lawrence Livermore and Los Alamos National Laboratories Conference
Strategic Weapons in the 21st Century
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Thank you! If you look at your program, you will note the word "Former" before my name. Thus I need to stress that I am speaking as a private citizen, although I think I would have said most of this last week when I was still a government official.

This is conference on Strategic Weapons. The concept of non-nuclear strategic weapons is an important one, firmly supported by the Nuclear Posture Review and worth a good deal of discussion. I am, however, going to confine my opening remarks almost entirely to nuclear weapons.

I want to start by suggesting some context for your discussions. We cannot intelligently decide where we are going without a clear understanding of where we are. Here's where I think we are:

1. **While the Nuclear Posture Review was intellectually the most significant development in nuclear thinking since the Sloss Study of thirty years ago, we have never gone beyond the broad concepts to articulate what the New Triad means in practical terms. As a result the NPR has been of limited value in presenting our story.**

2. **The Reliable Replacement Warhead offers a number of benefits and we should continue to support it strongly. By its very nature, however, it doesn't do much for the subject of this conference. The argument for the Reliable Replacement Warhead is that because we are going to have nuclear weapons for the foreseeable future, those weapons should be safe, secure, easy to manufacture and repair, and designed to increase the chance we can continue to certify without returning to nuclear testing. All of that is true, but it says nothing about the long-term political or military reasons to retain nuclear forces, or about their necessary military capabilities.**

3. **We are increasingly hearing from thoughtful observers that political support for the Reliable Replacement Warhead and the transformation of the weapons complex we are calling Complex 2030 will not be possible without greater consensus on the future role of nuclear weapons. Those taking this view call for a new national dialog on the purpose of nuclear weapons and the circumstances in which they are—and are not—relevant.**

4. **This Administration may not be able to foster or contribute to such a dialog. With my departure there are few if any confirmed civilian officials who routinely speak on nuclear matters. Such a dialog must originate in the White House, but it is hard to see how the NSC can focus on nuclear issues in the final two years, when it will be increasingly focused – even more than in the past – on Iraq.**

5. **The current U.S. strategy focuses on nonproliferation exclusively in terms of dealing with states seeking to possess nuclear weapons while paying essentially no attention to any regime involving those that already have such weapons may be nearing the end of its utility. Those few members of Congress on both sides of the aisle who care about nuclear weapons are likely to continue to make a linkage between nonproliferation abroad and RRW and Complex 2030 at home. We are not ready for any real discussion of that linkage; our strategy thus far is to explain why it shouldn't exist. We may well be right intellectually, but it is not clear we will be able to sustain such an approach politically.**

If this analysis is correct, this conference may need to aim at the next Administration. Two years ago, many of us hoped that the first year of the second term would give us the opportunity to foster a national debate on nuclear issues. It is now clear that such a debate is unlikely to happen within the broader national security community. Only the relatively small groups of those who care about nuclear weapons, most of whom are in this room, are likely to engage in that debate. What we need therefore is a coherent set of options that might be available whenever the country is ready for that debate, including in the next Administration.

This task would be hard enough but any sustainable view of strategic weapons in the 21st Century will have to overcome the series of myths, misperceptions and predispositions that are floating around, including:

1. **The misperception that the Nuclear Posture Review, by including non-nuclear capabilities, lowered the nuclear threshold rather than, as it actually did, begin to substitute conventional and non-kinetic weapons for some previously nuclear missions.**

2. **The belief that the Reliable Replacement Warhead is unnecessary because of plutonium aging, or because life extension programs and stockpile stewardship are working.**

3. **The belief that missile defenses won't work and, even if they did would be destabilizing, especially with respect to China.**

4. **The strong, visceral reaction on the Hill to anything that remotely suggests "new" nuclear weapons. This has resulted in the ludicrous situation whereby we must argue that RRW will utterly transform our approach to the stockpile and the weapons complex but that there is nothing "new" about it.**

With that as the backdrop, I want to give you my sense of some of the questions that it would be most useful for your discussions to elucidate. I'll organize them around the working groups into which you will be dividing.

In the area of <u>International and Domestic Dynamics</u>, I suggest that one major problem is the attitude of our international partners. Lew Dunn has recently done some analysis that suggests that most of the rest of the world thinks we are increasing our emphasis on nuclear weapons! As one who has spent much of the past five years trying to get anyone at all to pay attention to nuclear policy, I find this attitude stunning. But we need to recognize that it exists and that it has domestic implications as well.

This attitude is also related to an issue I mentioned earlier. Our approach to nonproliferation essentially ignores any role for limitations on existing states that possess nuclear weapons. Most of us in this room probably like such an approach, but I don't think it is sustainable in the long term. We need to figure out something better.

A third issue in the area of international and domestic dynamics is the need to figure out how we think about China. The dissuasion pillar of the Nuclear Posture Review is usually assumed to be directed at China and to imply that we are not prepared to accept nuclear parity with China. In National Missile Defense we have never fully decided whether China is a big rogue to be deterred by denying it the capability for ballistic missile attack or a small Russia, to be deterred through the threat of devastating retaliation.

Finally, our domestic debate is dominated by misinformation. I suggested some examples earlier. If you want one recent illustration, see the January 15 New York Times editorial on the Reliable Replacement Warhead. The title says it all: "Busywork for Nuclear Scientists." If we are to control the future of strategic weapons in the 21st century, we will have to find a way to have the debate based on facts. In my previous self-appointed role as spokesman for American nuclear policy I have been trying for years to articulate those facts, but with limited success. We need to do better.

I think the biggest question in the area of <u>Doctrine and Operations</u>—indeed arguably the most important question facing us in any nuclear area—is the fundamental purpose or purposes of nuclear weapons in the

21st century. I'm not thinking of the assure, dissuade, deter and defeat typology. It is fine at the conceptual level. Rather I think we lack consensus on the concrete types of situations (other than the residual role in deterring large scale attack from Russia) in which nuclear weapons are relevant.

Even where we know that nuclear weapons are relevant, we lack consensus on the details of <u>how</u> they are relevant. A painful example: it seems self-evident that allowing a potential adversary a sanctuary beyond the reach of U.S. power weakens deterrence. One such sanctuary might be within hard and deeply buried structures. Yet one proposal to conduct limited research on adapting an existing weapon as a Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator was greeted with outrage in many quarters. I believe some of the reaction had nothing to do with nuclear weapons but reflected strong disagreements with the Administration's overall approach to the use of force. But we also saw reactions from those for whom the only legitimate function of nuclear weapons is deterrence, conceived of exclusively as involving the threat of retaliation against cities.

A second question in the area of doctrine has to do with the relationship between nuclear and non-nuclear capabilities. It is virtually certain that we will see an increasing use of non-nuclear strategic capabilities. The recognition that non-nuclear or non-kinetic capabilities can perform functions previously reserved for nuclear weapons was one of the most important insights of the Nuclear Posture Review. Yet the debate over conventional Trident teaches us that this concept is neither accepted nor, in some cases, well understood. Some believe that the NPR called for more use of nuclear weapons against targets previously assigned to non-nuclear strike. Others believe on grounds of arms control theology that there should be a separation between systems used to deliver nuclear weapons and all other military systems. Both of these beliefs are wrong, but they are persistent. We need a better articulation of what the integration of nuclear and non-nuclear strike capabilities really means.

Finally, any review of doctrine might seek to clarify the role of so called non-strategic nuclear weapons. The title of the conference "Strategic Weapons in the 21st Century" will lead us inevitably to focus on central strategic systems. But whatever the military theories of the past, politically there is no such thing as a non-strategic nuclear weapon. As we think through the role of strategic weapons in the 21st century it ought to include the operational or political roles—if any—for battlefield or tactical or non-strategic weapons, however we chose to call them.

The <u>Implementation Strategy</u> narrative for workshop discussion strikes me as thoughtful. The notion of distinguishing between readiness and responsiveness is a valuable construct and I hope that panel will

spend much of its time amplifying it. One additional area of possible focus is new capabilities. Here I think we need to be very careful.

Most of you recognize that we have the wrong stockpile *politically* (it's too big), the wrong stockpile from a *physical security* standpoint (it doesn't consider the post 9/11 threat, which drives a security posture based on "denial of access" rather than "containment"), and the wrong stockpile *technically* (it's based on maximum yield to weight ratio and low margins, it's not designed for longevity, it's hard to remanufacture).

Many of us—including me—also think we have the wrong stockpile *militarily.* We think yields in the legacy stockpile are too high, that the stockpile lacks important mission capabilities (hard and deeply buried targets, mobiles, agent defeat, etc.), that too much of our capability is in MIRVs, and that the stockpile is not geared for small attacks requiring both absolutely assured destruction of limited number of targets and flexibility in command and control, using what is sometimes called the "silver-bullet" concept. We may be right, but that is irrelevant.

Thus far the professional military has not chosen to embrace new capabilities. We need to avoid giving the appearance that there are new capabilities being pushed by the labs. Technology may permit building devices that can generate tailored outputs, but absent some clear military requirement, calling for such devices will simply reinforce the perception of "busywork for scientists" embodied in the recent New York Times editorial.

Yet it may well be that new capabilities will be required. But for now, we must concentrate not on new military capabilities but on retaining and strengthening the ability to respond to new military requirements in the future. "Responsiveness" must include such an ability. Determining how to preserve and exercise such a contribution within probable political constraints would be a valuable contribution.

The final panel is on <u>Science and Deterrence</u>. The recognition that science underpins deterrence is important. A strong deterrent grows from great weapons science and great weapons science grows from great general science including, increasingly, the use of simulation, which many believe is becoming a third pillar of the scientific method along with theory and experiment. Thus one task for the community is to consider how we can continue to have the weapons laboratories embody world-class science and engineering. This panel might help.

It would also be useful to identify the areas of science and technology where we have either new requirements or unusual shortfalls. For example, some might see radio-chemistry less important now that we are no longer engaged in nuclear testing. Yet the growing requirements of nuclear forensics may require an expansion of the community. After all, we

want states to believe that if terrorists acquire materials or weapons and use them against the United States, we will know where the material came from and will respond appropriately. That suggests a need for specific technical skills. There are doubtless many other examples.

In the long term, the strategic weapons of the 21st century will only retain their long-term effectiveness if they are supported by a transformed nuclear weapons enterprise. With Complex 2030 we are beginning that transformation. Our plan is easy to describe but difficult to implement. We need to stop refurbishing some of the Cold War stockpile and apply the savings to finance transformation to a stockpile that is easier to manufacture and certify, less costly, and easier to adapt to changing requirements. Thereafter we need to reduce the stockpile further, both for policy and cost reasons. While none of the panels directly address this transformation, it needs to be in the background of all of our minds. Policy, doctrine, rhetoric, and even operational concepts can change quickly. The complex cannot. Sustained support for transformation will be crucial.

That brings me back to my opening caution. We need a coherent vision for our nuclear future that commands respect from the Hill and strong support from the Executive branch. We need a new broad political consensus on nuclear policy in the post Cold War era. We even need a new arms control and non-proliferation strategy--like it or not, this is still key to political acceptability in Congress and internationally. We are not likely to get any of those in the next two years, faced with divided government, Iraq, indifference in the military services, the almost non-existent Hill support for anything new, and the nearly-imminent Presidential campaign.

Does that mean we are wasting our time today and tomorrow? Not at all. We must do the intellectual work to prepare for the future. We must be willing to carry on a debate with folks who don't yet know the "right" answer or have a different right answer from us. If we can't have the debate earlier than 2009, we must be ready then with the concepts necessary for a meaningful review. That will be hard, but we must do it.

Nuclear weapons will be with us as long as anyone in this room is alive. The political conditions for abolition are unlikely and the technology to verify abolition doesn't exist. Sooner or later nuclear forces, policy and doctrine will once again play a commanding role in our national security strategy. Our task is to ensure that our nation is ready for that day.

Thank you for your attention. I'm looking forward to the results of your deliberations.